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What liberals share with Libertarians.

## A Vote for Ed Clark

If you're part of the voting half of the adult population, you might want to think about giving the Libertarian party and its candidate, Ed Clark, a vote this autumn. Notice the order of the suggestion—Libertarian party first, name of candidate second. The emphasis is not on the candidate, with the name of his party almost as an afterthought.

A person without any party is someone without any outside discipline, without a set of principles shared with an even amorphously defined body of persons. This year we even have a major candidate who makes a virtue of having no party. To select John Anderson means to make a judgment on the man and the man alone, something that's not easy to do for the tens of millions who haven't had the pleasure of meeting the gentleman.

Not that you can be sure that a candidate, once elected, will adhere to what appear to be his party's guidelines and principles. Behold Jimmy Carter administering the hard money policies associated with the Republicans, as we saw Richard Nixon administering the price controls and budget deficit policies associated with the Democrats.

Nevertheless, while the major parties do represent tendencies, sentiments, and prejudices which make them somewhat distinguishable from each other, you must turn to the Libertarians to find a party that dominates and disciplines its candidate. Ed Clark, the non-charismatic Los Angeles lawyer of almost bureaucratic demeanor, did not capture the Libertarians as Ronald Reagan has seized the Republicans and Carter holds the Democrats.

Libertarians only nominate fellow Libertarians, so the party itself, this amalgam of strains and traditions in American life and politics, deserves looking into, if for no other reason than libertarianism is the only political philosophy to catch the imagination of younger people in the past few years. From a handful of persons in 1972, the party has grown to 5,000 or 6,000—or perhaps even more—loyal activists who have learned the lessons of persistence and organization. Without much of an assist from the mass media, Libertarians have evangelized and organized successfully enough to place Clark's name on the ballot in every state. This is one of the more important reasons for voting for him if you want to make an effective protest. Barry Commoner, worthy man that he is, will be on so few ballots this November it will be mathematically impossible for him to roll up the significant protest vote within Clark's reach.

How have the Libertarians been able to attract people? Who joins? Although most Libertarians, but not all, are ferocious, Adam Smithian free marketeers, the party doesn't attract big corporate money. The notable exception is the Koch (pronounced Coke) family of Wichita, Kansas. The Kochs operate one of America's largest privately held corporations (last year's gross has been estimated at around four billion dollars) and one of the Koch family members is running on the ticket with Clark. But generally American capitalism has held aloof from the party, which on first inspection seems undeviatingly committed to creating the social and political conditions business says it must have to thrive.

However, since Libertarians are unalterably opposed to such practices as subsidizing nuclear energy or limiting electric companies' liability when they have Three Mile Island-type accidents, most big business sorts quickly decide that this isn't the kind of government the corporations want. Repeal of these laws would also mean repeal of the laws protecting polluters from damage suits, which would make it much more difficult for outfits like Occidental Petroleum's Hooker Chemical to commit a Love Canal without having to pay heavy real and punitive damages. In the board rooms, they know EPA regulation is much gentler.

The people who join the Libertarian party often are second-generation, college-trained younger people who believe all that stuff about the meritocracy. For them libertarianism is the way to keep life's race honest. This is the class that is convinced that they as individuals can do the job, any job; that they can found the business, provide the product, and do all that needs doing if they get the chance and if the tax man doesn't steal the rewards when they do.

But there is also a libertarianism of the left. It is composed of people who still honor the goals of the New Deal, the Fair Deal, and the Great Society but who need no more convincing that in the practical realm they can't be reached through the expensive Washington-centered bureaucracies characteristic of our era's failed liberalism. The Libertarian left doesn't dispute the neoconservative analysis of what went wrong, but does disagree about what to do about it.

Instead of collapsing into the arms of General Electric while taking wild walks on the supply side, the Libertarian left is as unwilling to live under the rule of centralized corporate power as of centralized government power. Instead, this new left is embracing a mixture of old ideas, of Jefferson and Kropotkin, a vision which sees the non-coercive Libertarian society as the rich, brown ground for cooperative and commune, for building distributive justice from the ground

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